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SCORE RELEASES REPORT FOLLOWING TEACHER EVALUATION FEEDBACK PROCESS
Includes Successes, Concerns, and Recommendations Following the First Year of Implementation

(Nashville) - The State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE) today released a report, [*Supporting Effective Instruction in Tennessee*](#), regarding Tennessee's teacher evaluation system. The report follows a five-month listening and feedback process SCORE led on the evaluation system to identify what is working well, gather input on challenges and concerns, and report back with a range of recommendations to the Tennessee Department of Education and State Board of Education.

"SCORE's role in this process has been to listen," SCORE President and CEO Jamie Woodson said. "It is our hope that this report and its recommendations will build on key successes of the new teacher evaluation system and support improvements moving forward, while always keeping the focus on what it takes to improve student achievement in our state."

Research shows that effective teaching is the most important school-based factor in improving student achievement. Tennessee is now completing the first year of implementing a new teacher evaluation system, designed to identify and support effective teaching.

In December 2011, Governor Bill Haslam asked SCORE to lead a statewide listening and feedback process, independent of state government, regarding the evaluation system. Since January, SCORE gathered more than 27,000 inputs from educators and other stakeholders across Tennessee. This input was collected through nine regional roundtables, an online questionnaire for educators, a work team of educators throughout the state, in-depth interviews on teacher evaluation with leaders in and outside of Tennessee, and existing networks of teachers, principals, and district leaders. SCORE's work supplements additional ongoing feedback collected by the Tennessee Department of Education and by the Tennessee Consortium on Research, Evaluation, and Development (TNCRED).

SCORE heard consistent and positive feedback on many aspects of the evaluation, including that the system is improving both the quality of instruction and student results. SCORE also heard challenges related to the implementation of the new system, including perceptions that the evaluation is overly focused on accountability and not enough on improving and supporting effective teaching.

SCORE gathered this feedback and has provided seven specific recommendations to continue improving the evaluation system moving forward:

- **Recommendation 1: *Ensure current and prospective teachers and leaders receive sufficient training in the evaluation system.***
- **Recommendation 2: *Link the feedback that teachers receive with high-quality, collaborative, and individualized professional learning opportunities so that they can improve their instruction.*** Tennessee's teacher evaluation system needs to balance accountability for results with a focus on improving instruction, which is the key to improving student outcomes. To do so, the Department of Education and districts must provide meaningful professional learning opportunities and support to help teachers improve.

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- **Recommendation 3: *Address challenges with the current quantitative and qualitative measures of teacher effectiveness.*** Many of the issues that have arisen are not due to problems with the First to the Top plan for teacher evaluation, but rather from the remaining gaps in the development and implementation of measures of the evaluation system. We recommend these gaps in the quantitative measure and some missing elements in the qualitative measure be addressed as soon as possible. For example, we recommend the state offer teachers in non-tested grades and subjects (who do not yet have individual student growth, or value-added, data) the option of temporarily increasing the weighting of the qualitative portion of the evaluation.
- **Recommendation 4: *Support school and district leaders in becoming strong instructional leaders capable of assessing and developing effective teaching – and hold them accountable for doing so.***
- **Recommendation 5: *Re-engage educators in those districts where implementation of the teacher evaluation system has faltered during the first year of work.***
- **Recommendation 6: *Integrate the ongoing implementation of the teacher evaluation system and the Common Core State Standards so that they work together to improve student outcomes.*** All of the approved evaluation models should reflect the shifts in instruction that will be required as Tennessee implements higher, more rigorous academic standards through the Common Core State Standards.
- **Recommendation 7: *Drive continuous improvement of the teacher evaluation system at the state, district, and school levels.*** Leaders and educators must commit to improving the teacher evaluation system on an ongoing basis to maximize its impact on student achievement. For example, school districts should apply for flexibility from the Department of Education (an option currently available) to address their unique issues and concerns.

“We appreciate the tremendous support of our partners who assisted SCORE in gathering valuable feedback from educators and citizens across the state,” Woodson said. “The evaluation system that Tennessee is implementing is already improving the quality of teaching in the classroom and is supporting inspired, high-quality instruction in many districts. As needed refinements are made, the system will realize its full potential as a powerful platform for supporting effective instruction across the state and, therefore, gains in student achievement and growth.”

The following organizations partnered with SCORE to gather feedback from educators and other stakeholders: the Tennessee Education Association (TEA), Tennessee Business Roundtable, Tennessee School Boards Association (TSBA), Tennessee Organization of School Superintendents (TOSS), Tennessee Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Tennessee PTA, Tennessee Principals Association, and Professional Educators of Tennessee (PET).

The executive summary of the report can be [downloaded here](#).

The full report can be [downloaded here](#).

The State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE) collaboratively supports Tennessee’s work to prepare students for college and the workforce. We are an independent, non-profit, and non-partisan advocacy and research institution, founded by former U.S. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist.

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